

A change of heart?

The white South Africans will only act in what they believe are their own longest term interests —by some these may be seen to coincide with African rule

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I AM OFTEN ASKED, "What hope is there of a change in heart in South Africa?" Often, too, I hear liberal plans put forward which seem to assume that a "change of heart" is possible; meaning that white South Africans may yet bring themselves to discuss, and even to accept, the possibility of *de jure* integration and majority rule, if not with good grace, at least because they see it as inevitable.

Living under the combined influences of deterrents, propaganda, governmental strength and economic stability, why should any White South African discuss, or even enquire into, the possibility of change in his country's power and land holding structure?

The creation of new states from old dependencies in greater Africa and the power of statesmen once branded as agitators raise startling possibilities for all South Africans. At home, men and women cannot but notice changes which touch their personal lives. For instance, nonwhites do not forget the personal tragedies and insecurity which arbitrary rule inflicts on them. More and more white youths find their employment or education affected by military service. Because of these and similar changes, white South Africans have not only noted the possibility of change but know that their hold on power is threatened.

The majority of white South Africans have reacted to the possibility of change in one of these ways, irrationally and emotionally; they have either stopped their eyes and ears, or are determined to prevent change at all costs.

A few Whites, however, have tried to observe and evaluate their situation dispassionately; some, myself included, have tried to calculate rationally what the future is likely to hold and have acted on their conclusions. Why? The question is relevant to my original one because the people who can use their heads in this way seem the only group likely to resist the influences of their environment and remain open to a change of heart in the present circumstances.

Obviously I cannot answer this question for anyone but myself. I cannot even answer for myself with certainty, for no one analyses his own experiences or mental processes wholly rationally. But my upbringing in Britain and my South African adult life were conventional, and the background experiences which have shaped my outlook on South African affairs are common to a good many Whites, indigenous or immigrant. These experiences may thus provide clues for observers who wish to assess the chances of other white South Africans appraising their situation as I tried to do.

Many adolescents rebel outright against their parents' opinions and social standards. My own rebellion took the form of rejecting my social destiny to be a debutante because (I said) of the looming shadow of Hitler's war. This kind of rebellion was fairly common among English 'teen-agers of the later thirties. The years of change from the Depression, through Edward VIII's abdication to the Spanish Civil War had made a good many of us politically conscious, and we found our society smug and archaic. We focussed on the political scene the resentment against the environment through which the young normally assert their adult right to plan their own future.

WHATEVER THE TRIGGER, the youngster's first awakening is usually followed by a period in which he notices every occurrence of the feature which displeases him, and his resentment builds up as he keeps the score until he finally breaks out in rebellious action. In intelligent youngsters, this process of reaching rebellion-point is at least partly conscious and analytical, and of course any higher education they get encourages an intellectual approach.

People only examine dangers in their environment rationally if they believe that they can escape from the scene in the last resort; for instance, if they have confidence in their intellectual or job-finding capacity. People who see no possibility of escape, such as a farmer or a retired man whose pension is paid locally, seldom face changes which seem perilous. They ignore them, or react passionately against any suggestion that they should try to adapt to them, tough as it may be. In this respect, even the carefully indoctrinated young usually have less

interest in standing fast against change than their elders; they have fewer memories and years of work to lose, and they have as a rule more energy and confidence to face tough going or to escape.

In London's war, I got an inkling at first hand of how tough things could be. It destroyed a lot of my illusions. One doesn't think many heroic or idealistic thoughts when one is queuing for horsemeat or dodging bombs.

But there remained, undented, the belief shaped by my whole upbringing, that the basic security of every adult human being lies in planning his own future without arbitrary interference by others. As a corollary, I took it for granted, naively, that the Rule of Law and a voice in how he is governed (i.e. a vote) are the twin vital guarantees of basic security for any individual, regardless of whether he uses his vote intelligently and no matter whether it has weight (i.e. is cast in a marginal constituency) or not. By basic security, I mean the condition which the individual values, beyond all others, as essential for his life's continuance: owning land or cash, for instance, belonging to a powerful nation, or having a child to carry on his name.

My faith in these guarantees was still unquestioned because we British had never experienced Hitler's direct rule.

In post-war South Africa, the successive steps taken towards arbitrary rule between 1948 and 1960 shocked me more deeply than most European immigrants and probably more than most South Africans. South Africa had a history of British arbitrary rule and was used to wielding arbitrary power over non-Whites. For me, violations of the constitution and the Rule of Law in the place where I lived were a new and shattering experience. My faith in their inviolable protective capacity was broken, even though I did not suffer personally through their ravishment. The point was, I *could* suffer. Perhaps some indoctrinated white supremacists may yet lose their faith in their white armour in a similar way.

With the coming of arbitrary rule, a new realisation struck me. For the first time, I was a member of a minority opinion group within my own society; furthermore, it was a helpless group.

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ning for their lives usually make for the nearest bolt-hole, regardless of whether it will be safe in the long term.

But these people are not wholly irrational. They do not let their emotions dictate to them in business. If they realise that it is in their interest to stay calm and to forecast their political future as they do their balance-sheets, they may — just may — use their heads.

Many people have sons and daughters. These too, may represent security for their parents, the security of knowing that their spark of life will be carried on. Many Jews stayed in Germany to make money — and to die — for the children they sent away. Parents seek as a rule to do their best for their children, and they are most vulnerable where their children's welfare is concerned. It is easier to persuade them that their children should come to terms with the future than that they should do so themselves.

The young, the competent, the money-makers, the parents — people with reasonable intelligence and the belief, however inchoate, that they can escape their situation if they must! These are the people who may, by heuristic means, come to a rational appraisal of their situation.

Many may well conclude that change is not likely and do nothing. Some may conclude that change is inevitable but that the Government's strong arm can hold it back for their lifetimes. A few may conclude, not only that change is inevitable, but that it is in their interest to accept it, or even to work to bring it about with the least possible pain to themselves, although they do not like the prospect.

My own appraisal did not originate in emotional sympathy for the African plight; that came later when I probed their situation, and discussion of it is pointless here. I will only say this. What seems to be sympathy for others wronged by law or cruelty is very often indignant fear. No one can really appreciate the suffering of another if he has not felt similar pain; it is beyond his imagining, as blue is to those born blind.

Rational analysis is valueless unless it takes into account the power of human passion, which (as history shows) can change a nation's elite or the expected course of her behaviour with unforeseen suddenness. But weighing the probable effects of emotion is not the same as feeling it. Let no one suppose that sweet charity and love for non-white rule will necessarily flow out of white power-holders who forecast that majority rule will come and deem it wise to accept the fact. They cannot reason their way to that sort of change of heart, or into selfless sacrifice. Even if they decide that the correct course is to hand over power and begin to work towards the change, they will be still acting, consciously or unconsciously in their own longest-term interest, and cannot be expected to do otherwise. They are human beings, and human nature is like that.

The new experience of being helpless, the uselessness of being angry, were salutary shocks. In British school history books, democracy, like virtue in Victorian novels, always won in the end. There must be some way to fight, *some* remedy. I had two sons. Their future security seemed threatened with mine. My husband and I felt, rather than thought, that we had to do *something*. The only action left to us which might be productive was to analyse our situation and try to forecast South Africa's future dispassionately on behalf of us all. At least, then, we would know whether our insecurity was as great as we believed.

If we had been disturbed by secondary fears only, we might well have buried our heads in the sand of our prosperous white existence. But once given the belief that our basic security was in peril, our pleasant life actually encouraged us to analyse our situation, because we wanted to stay if we could.

Of course the concepts which represented security for me at that time do not represent them for everyone; it would be absurd to believe, for instance, that many Africans want, or would base their security on, multi-party government. But I do believe this: if a man discovers that his basic security, whatever it may repose in, is imperilled by a threat which he cannot possibly combat by means of an unreasoned, emotional reaction, he may try to face his situation rationally; it is in his fundamental interest to do so. He is only likely to recognise this, however, if he lacks the bolt-hole of group security, either because his group is small or weak, or because he is one of a minority among his own kind.

Most English-speaking South Africans and immigrants believe that their basic security in South Africa lies in economic power protected by Whiteness, not in votes and the Rule of Law. Having a useless Opposition vote does not harm any white voter's bank balance, and the Rule of Law still operates for most of them. But threats to their money or their white privilege seem vital to them, and provoke in them the obvious, immediate response; they hurrow under the nearest strong arm — that of the government which promises, and indeed seems able, to protect their savings, farms, pension or investments *now*. People run-

Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-91; the Making of a New Elite by Jacob Ade Ajayi (Longmans, 35s.)

Notes on the Tribes, Provinces, Emirates, and States of the Northern Provinces of Nigeria by O. Temple (Frank Cass & Co., 65s.)

IT IS A HUNDRED YEARS since Samuel Crowther, the famous Christian missionary who was to become Nigeria's first indigenous Bishop, reported to his superiors about the reluctance of the elders of Igbessa to encourage missionary work: "they were afraid that we were pioneers of the Lagos government which would follow our steps and take away their country; that they had been strongly warned against receiving us and that by persons from Lagos."

Igbessa was a town near Lagos, annexed by the British crown a few years earlier. The elders' fears were only too well justified. Christian missionaries had been instrumental in bringing about the annexation of Lagos, and the rest of Nigeria was eventually to share the fate of that city. In spite of the antagonisms between the men of God and the palm-oil ruffians, missionaries and traders generally co-operated, as did the humanitarians and the commercial interests in Britain. It had become the doctrine of the day 'that the only way of ending the African slave trade was to replace it by 'legitimate' trade, which would open Africa to the civilising influences of export crop production and European merchandise. This was an aim on which Church and Commerce could agree, and the sum of their efforts in this direction eventually forced the British government, against its will at first, to assume direct control of the territories concerned in order to protect British interests.

To this extent the historical view which sees missionary endeavour in Africa as having paved the way for colonial expansion is confirmed by the Nigerian experience; but the picture is